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VIETNAM, NIXON, & McGOVERN'S CANDIDACY

THE EDITORS

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TRANSITION

P. CHATTOPADHYAY

Socialists & Labor in the U.S.

PAUL LE BLANC

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Foreign readers of MR who in the past subscribed through our London office were recently informed that in the future all foreign subscriptions will be handled through MR's New York office. This change has apparently created problems for some subscribers in the sterling area who find it difficult to pay in U.S. dollars. We have therefore made new arrangements to overcome such obstacles. Those who prefer to pay in sterling can now send their subscriptions or renewals to the London office (see address above). Once the subscription is entered, however, we would appreciate any further advice, as for example changes of address and complaints, to be sent to the New York office.

MR readers will be interested to know that Caedmon Records has recently issued *Lorraine Hansberry Speaks Out: Art and the Black Revolution*, a compilation of some of Lorraine Hansberry's best speeches and interviews. This record includes the talk she gave at the meeting in New York in May 1964 that celebrated MR's fifteenth birthday. In addition,

(*Continued on inside back cover*)

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VIETNAM, NIXON, AND THE McGOVERN CANDIDACY

If one were writing about Vietnam for a readership which, like the great majority of Americans, gets most of its information from the commercial press and airwaves, one would have to analyze in detail the overall picture which has been conveyed, or at any rate has sought to be conveyed, during the spring and summer months of 1972. That picture is of a peace-loving South Vietnam, struggling to get on its military and economic feet with generous U.S. assistance, being brutally invaded across an established international border by an enormous Soviet- and Chinese-supplied war machine directed by the evil Communist genius of General Giap. The manifest purpose of this naked aggression has been to overrun South Vietnam, occupy its main cities and its capital, expel (if not massacre) remaining American forces, ending with the total conquest of South Vietnam by North Vietnam and the liquidation of all patriots who had fought to protect South Vietnam's independence. Owing to the tactical advantage of surprise and the incompetence of some high South Vietnamese military leaders, the invading forces scored some early successes; but this phase was weathered and the brave South Vietnamese soldiers, with new leaders where necessary and skillfully deployed support from U.S. air and sea power, managed to stem the tide and here and there go over to the counteroffensive. By mid-summer the situation had been essentially stabilized, and the prospect was for a more or less rapid return to the *status quo ante.*

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Nixon's Vietnamization policy had thus passed its most severe test and could be considered a success.

That was approximately the story which was being told to the average newspaper reader or TV viewer. It is of course impossible to tell whether, or to what extent, he or she believes it; but however that may be, there can hardly be any doubt that radicals both in and out of the United States recognize it as false and phony from beginning to end and that there is therefore no need, when addressing a group like the readers of MONTHLY REVIEW, for a detailed or documented refutation. Thanks to the brilliant current reporting of Wilfred Burchett in the *Guardian* and such perceptive survey articles as Tom Hayden's "The Prospects of the Vietnam Offensive" in the August *Ramparts,* and even to revelations in played-down reports in such papers as the *New York Times,* the *Wall Street Journal,* the *Washington Post,* etc., we of the Left know that the real situation in Vietnam is very different from, and in crucial respects even diametrically opposed to, what the "official" line seeks to convey.*

We know that the whole idea of an international border in the middle of Vietnam is the biggest of many big lies of the last two decades. We know that insofar as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) was established to aid in sorting out Vietminh and French forces, it was an integral part of the Geneva Accords of 1954, which have been massively and continuously violated by the United States and its Saigon puppets, most recently in the early months of 1972 by renewed heavy bombing of the North. We know that the Vietnamese cannot invade

* It was one of the greatest contributions of I. F. Stone's *Hidden History of the Korean War* (recently reprinted by Monthly Review Press) to have demonstrated with exemplary clarity how a reader with the necessary historical background and knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of bourgeois journalism can piece together from the "respectable" press a picture of events totally at odds with that conveyed to the ordinary reader. This is important, but it is no reason to celebrate the "fairness" or "objectivity" of this class of newspapers. After all, ordinary readers are the main target and they are still being very efficiently brainwashed by the likes of the *New York Times.* As one small example, note how the *Times* invariably refers to the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam as the "enemy," the "foe," and the like. Whatever *we* may think about it, there is no doubt that in the eyes of the *Times,* they *are* the enemy. And naturally no one tries to paint the enemy *couleur de rose.*

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themselves.* We know that the aim of the spring offensive of the NLF and the DRV was not the military one of occupying the cities of the South and annexing the South to the North, but rather the political one of revealing to the world, and especially to the American people, the utter bankruptcy of Nixon's policy of Vietnamization. We know that but for the greatest air and naval bombardment in history, the puppet regime of General Thieu would have collapsed and disappeared in the first weeks of the offensive. We know that Thieu's army, far from scoring counteroffensive victories, has been repeatedly sucked into strategic traps where it is being slowly destroyed, while throughout most of the but-recently "pacified" countryside the NLF is taking over and consolidating its power.

We know all this, and yet we also know that despite the spectacular failure of his Vietnamization policy Nixon has not budged one inch from the war aim which he inherited from his predecessors in the White House and which he has unbendingly adhered to since his own accession to office in January of 1969, i.e., the maintenance in Saigon of a subservient neocolonial regime. It is this fact, with all its manifold implications, which now urgently needs to be analyzed and understood.

We must ask first of all how it has been possible for Nixon to hew to an unchanged course despite the disastrous setbacks to his policy in Vietnam. The answer, quite simply, is that no force, military or political, has been brought to bear on him strong enough to *oblige* him to change his direction. Let us consider these two kinds of force, military and political, separately.

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* Since this invasion lie is one of the most potent weapons in Washington's propaganda armory, it may be helpful in countering it to make use of a hypothetical historical analogy. Suppose that in the 1860s the British had gone all out in support of the Confederacy (as indeed influential sections of the British bourgeoisie wanted to), had sent troops and ships to support the Southern military effort, had recognized the Confederacy as an independent nation, and in the course of all this had turned Jefferson Davis's government into a British puppet. Would further efforts of the Union government to end the secession and re-unify the country then be accurately described, in the words used by Nixon in his July 27th press conference, as "one of the most barbaric invasions in history"? No doubt the British would have done their best to put across this message, but who would have believed them? In essentials, if not in details, the historical analogy accurately depicts the situation in Vietnam today.

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It is obvious that the Vietnamese themselves have never had the kind of military strength needed to expel the United States from Vietnam, let alone all of Southeast Asia. No matter what the Vietnamese do, U.S. aircraft and naval vessels can continue to attack their country—suffering serious losses, to be sure, but not such as to put an unbearable strain on the American economy. If, therefore, one speaks of effective military pressure being brought to bear on the United States, one must have in mind the Soviet Union and China. And indeed some left-wing people in the United States have been talking as though they thought these countries, acting singly or in combination, either could have been expected to intervene, or should have intervened, in Vietnam militarily in such a way as to force Nixon to choose between withdrawal and a much bigger war. Regardless of what one thinks Nixon's response to this choice might be, it must be emphasized that this whole line of reasoning is unrealistic. From the very beginning of the war in Southeast Asia, both the Soviet Union and China have pursued an extremely cautious policy, supplying the Vietnamese with the wherewithal to continue fighting but always carefully avoiding direct involvement. Not one of the crises of the war, of which there have been many, has been precipitated by an actual or threatened confrontation between the United States and Vietnam's powerful allies; all have been political crises originating in Vietnam or in the United States itself. Whatever one may think of this caution on the part of the Soviet Union and China—whether one considers it admirable or despicable, its motives good or bad*—one would certainly be unrealistic in the extreme to expect it to be suddenly cast aside as a reaction to Nixon's frustrated mining and bombing of Vietnam, symptoms not of U.S. success but of U.S. failure.

So we finally come down to the political forces acting on Nixon. Conceivably, these might originate from U.S. allies, as

* In considering this question of motives, one must never forget that from the point of view of the Soviet Union and China, as well as many others around the world, the spectacle of the leading imperialist power being bogged down in a hopeless war of aggression against a determined revolutionary people, with a large part of its military strength committed and hence unavailable for use elsewhere, and with its internal fabric increasingly torn apart by growing tensions and conflicts—such a spectacle cannot be viewed with other than grim satisfaction.

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apparently happened at one stage during the Korean War, when British Prime Minister Clement Attlee is generally credited with having dissuaded Truman from using nuclear weapons. But nothing of that kind has happened this time, nor is there any reason to suppose that it was ever even a remote possibility. (There is, incidentally, more than a suspicion that America's allies as well as its enemies have been not unhappy at seeing the United States militarily and economically weakened by the continuation of the war in Southeast Asia.) The only political pressures which might have forced Nixon to change course would have had to be strictly internal to the United States, and they failed to materialize. Why? This is the big question to which, so far as we know, no one has yet provided a satisfactory answer.

In seeking this answer, we must go back to two earlier crises of the Vietnam War, those following the Tet offensive in 1968 and the invasion of Cambodia in the spring of 1970. In each case political forces were unleashed in the United States which shook the administration in power and obliged it to change its policy. Tet came at a time when the United States had more than 600,000 troops in and around Vietnam, and the automatic response of the U.S. military was to demand more (Westmoreland's request was for 206,000 additional men). It was this demand which precipitated a crisis in the administration, with Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford and other high officials strongly advising Johnson against further escalation of the American role in the war. After weeks of agonizing, he accepted this advice, with its logical corollaries—the opening of the Paris peace talks and his own retirement from political life. In retrospect, we can see that what underlay this crisis was not so much opposition to the war as such as opposition to the use of American soldiers to fight the war.

Nixon was shrewd enough to see this, and when protests began to mount again in a threatening way in the summer and fall of 1969, by which time it was obvious that his campaign rhetoric about peace was never intended seriously, he invented his new policy of Vietnamization (announced in a speech on November 3, 1969). U.S. soldiers would be gradually withdrawn, and the burden of the fighting would be turned over to the puppet forces. But even Nixon misjudged the depth of

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opposition in the United States to Americans' fighting in Vietnam: there is no other way to explain his commitment of U.S. troops to the invasion of Cambodia the following spring. This of course was followed by an unprecedented outburst of protest which threw a real scare into the U.S. ruling class and forced Nixon to beat a hasty retreat. From that time on it was clear that U.S. ground forces might as well be withdrawn from Vietnam since they couldn't be used there anyway: further military participation would have to be confined to the airforce and the navy. The following winter's attempted invasion of Laos by Saigon's forces, backed by massive American air support, showed that this kind of Vietnamization was basically unworkable. The invasion was routed, and some of Saigon's elite units were smashed in the process. But at home the verdict was different. The relative mildness of the protest at the Laos invasion demonstrated that Vietnamization, whatever its weaknesses in Vietnam, had succeeded quite well in defusing the opposition to the war at home.

At this point we may profitably pause to consider changing attitudes within the U.S. ruling class to the war in Vietnam. In the first place, we must be entirely clear that there has never been the slightest doubt in the minds of this country's leaders, regardless of economic background or political affiliation, about the vital importance of Southeast Asia to U.S. interests. The reasons are not to be sought in specific trade, investment, and/or raw material concerns but rather in the significance of the region to the viability and stability of the global capitalist/imperialist system. This has been admirably demonstrated by Richard Du Boff in an article, "Business Ideology and Foreign Policy: The National Security Council and Vietnam," to appear in volume 5 of the Senator Mike Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers.* On the basis of a careful analysis of papers and memoranda of the National Security Council from its inception in 1947-1948, Du Boff shows that already by 1954, the year the French were expelled from Indochina, "South Vietnam was held to be vital for American security, its future was not to be subject to negotiation of any sort, and it had to be

* *The Pentagon Papers: Commentaries, Analysis, and Index,* Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, eds. (Boston: Beacon Press, forthcoming).

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defended by military action—including U.S. intervention—if need be." Du Boff rightly emphasizes that this has remained the hard core of U.S. policy in Vietnam ever since; and there is no reason to believe that any significant section of the ruling class has ever questioned its essential desirability. But what has varied from time to time is the extent of confidence in ruling-class circles that the policy could actually be successfully carried through.

These doubts recur throughout the Pentagon Papers, especially in intelligence summaries by the CIA, and are reflected in Hamlet-like hesitations and procrastinations by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson during the period when ultimate responsibility for decision-making fell on them. But for the most part the only effect was somewhat to delay and trim the recommendations of the military, which over the years has pretty much had its own way. The one big exception which we know about and which has already been referred to was Johnson's refusal of the request for additional manpower following the 1968 Tet offensive. Here the reasons for the negative advice given to Johnson by his top civilian advisers (including a number of the ruling class's senior "wise men" outside of governmental ranks) were apparently a mixture of the political and the economic. Activity in the antiwar movement was on the rise, and Johnson's popularity was so low that he hardly dared to show his face in public. Commitment of more American troops to the war would have been sure to aggravate this situation, with unpredictable consequences. Furthermore, it would have added to the already growing unreliability of the ground forces fighting in Vietnam and intensified draft resistance at home. But perhaps even more important in the eyes of these political agents of the big bourgeoisie were the threats posed by rising inflation and an increasingly severe disequilibrium in the balance of payments, both of which urgently required that the costs of the war, especially the costs in foreign currencies, should be reduced rather than increased. Finally, there was a feeling that any further commitment of U.S. military and economic power in Southeast Asia would seriously undermine the country's ability to influence the course of events in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

In the case of Nixon's withdrawal from the involvement of

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U.S. ground forces in the invasion of Cambodia, no story of what went on behind the scenes has yet been published. But it seems safe to assume that the motivation was almost entirely political. The reaction of the students to the invasion itself was unprecedentedly vociferous and in some instances violent, and the killings at Kent State and Jackson State poured fuel on the flames. For a moment the country seemed on the verge of ungovernability, an extremely frightening prospect for any bourgeoisie. Nixon apparently figured that only by beating a hasty retreat could he bring the situation under control. After that he began groping for the formula which would enable him to continue to pursue the same old aim of maintaining a neocolonial regime in Saigon without precipitating further political or economic crises within the United States, and without having to depend on U.S. ground forces to carry on the war.

To many people, ourselves included, Nixon's policy of Vietnamization seemed to contain an obvious and fatal contradiction.* The reasoning was that it would work at home only as long as its unworkability in Vietnam had not been dramatically demonstrated. A renewed offensive by the liberation forces would expose the rottenness of the Thieu regime and its utter dependence on U.S. military support, force Washington to re-escalate the American involvement, and thus set the stage for a re-enactment in a more intensified form of the Tet and Cambodian crises. The spring offensive has shown that up to a point this reasoning was perfectly correct. The Thieu regime was exposed, and re-escalation of U.S. involvement was necessary to save it. But Nixon had found a form of re-escalation via air and naval power which proceeded along with continued withdrawal of U.S. ground forces and required no drastic increase in the financial cost of the war. The protest, once again centered in the universities, was certainly not negligible. On the other hand, it was not on a large enough scale to threaten disruption of economic and social life. The result was that no crisis materialized, and the ruling class accepted Nixon's policy, with all its ghastly implications in terms of the destruction of a people and their country, with complete equanimity. If proof

* See "Vietnam, China, and the Coming Crisis," MONTHLY REVIEW (September 1971).

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of this is needed, it is amply provided by an article "What Businessmen Like, and Don't Like, About Nixon" in the July issue of Fortune. In the whole detailed recital of compliments and complaints, the words "Vietnam" and "war" do not appear even one single time. It is probably true that no ruling class in history has ever been moved by moral considerations—hence the futility of moral appeals—but it is also probably true that none has ever laid claim to morality as unctuously as the American bourgeoisie while at the same time acting in such a hideously immoral way.

It might be argued that this account of the reaction in the United States to the spring offensive omits an important factor which was not present at the time of either Tet or Cambodia, i.e., the antiwar presidential candidacy of George McGovern. Energy—so the argument runs—which might have swelled the protest against re-escalation was instead channeled into the McGovern campaign which, to many opponents of the war, seemed to offer a greater chance of achieving results. This is doubtless true up to a point, but it is also a line of reasoning which if pursued too far could lead the antiwar movement into a blind alley and ultimate defeat. The danger lies in trusting George McGovern to end the war.

Please do not misunderstand us. We are not arguing that the outcome of the election makes no difference. It was important that Johnson should have been a political victim of the Vietnam war, and it is even more important that Nixon should suffer a similar fate. American politicians should have it hammered into their heads that waging dirty imperialist wars is not a road to political advancement and honor. This alone would be enough reason for welcoming the upset in the Democratic Party which led to McGovern's candidacy—without of course entertaining any illusions about the ability of *any* president or political party to achieve more than superficial reforms within the framework of monopoly capitalism or to alter the system's basically expansionist and imperialist nature and aims.

But there is another reason too. McGovern has long been an opponent of the war—it does not matter for what mixture of personal and electoral reasons—a fact which has been explicitly acknowledged by Hanoi; and if he is elected, it will be largely because of his antiwar stance. But at the same time

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it cannot be overemphasized that this does *not* mean that, once in office, he would automatically end the war. Everything would depend on the pressures which would then be brought to bear on him from both inside and outside the government. And let there be no mistake about it: those accustomed to exercising such pressure and in the best position to do so (in the Pentagon, in the higher reaches of the civilian bureaucracy, in the big Washington law firms, in the executive suites of the giant corporations) will, with few exceptions, have supported Nixon, will be thoroughly imbued with the long-standing official line that the United States cannot afford to "lose" Southeast Asia, and will be passionately opposed to both McGovern and what he is pledged to do with respect to Vietnam. Isolated and sabotaged at every turn, McGovern would stand little chance of getting his policies implemented, *unless* at least equally strong pressure was being brought to bear on him from outside the government and outside the big bourgeoisie.

What form might this counter-pressure take? Certainly not the passive support of those who had elected him to office, as shown, for example, by the public opinion polls. As four years of Nixon should have conclusively proved, the ruling class doesn't give a damn about public opinion as long as it remains only opinion. It is only when opinion is translated into action that the ruling class sits up and takes notice, and only when the action is such as to threaten its vital interests that it changes course. And the kind of action it fears most is that which disrupts economic and social life and thus interferes with the rational pursuit of profit-making and capital-accumulation.

If this analysis is correct, the implication is plain that those who see the McGovern candidacy as the means of ending the Vietnam war had better be thinking in more than purely electoral terms. Even if he wins the election, it will be absolutely essential to put enough pressure on him, if need be by throwing the country into ungovernable turmoil, to enable him or force him, as the case may be, to carry out his pledges in the face of fierce ruling-class resistance.

The McGovern candidacy may of course fail, and Nixon may be reinstalled in the White House for another four years. That would not mean the end of the struggle to stop the Viet-

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nam war, but it would mean that the struggle would have to be taken up again in highly unfavorable circumstances. And for the Vietnamese people it would mean at the least a further long period of horrible suffering. We should also face the fact that it might mean much worse for them. What Nixon has in the back of his mind was all too clearly revealed at his July 27th press conference when he said: "We are not using the great power that could finish off North Vietnam in an afternoon, and we will not." What is this if not a veiled threat to wipe out a whole country with strategic nuclear weapons? Nixon says he won't do it, but by now we unfortunately know enough to take his threats seriously and to discount his promises at 100 percent. Who would dare put limits on what this heartless, cold-blooded representative of the U.S. ruling class will do if and when his policy of Vietnamization suffers a final and irretrievable collapse?

(August 10, 1972)

Earlier, Admiral Mack [former commander of the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific] noted that only seven Navy men had been lost during the bombing campaign, much of which is carried out by navy aviators. He observed: "This is a pretty good way to fight a war."

—*New York Times*, June 9, 1972

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ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

BY PARESH CHATTOPADHYAY

Most of the economic writings of the founders of scientific socialism, it is well known, are concerned with the analysis of capitalism. Though they had very much in view the social formation that was to succeed the existing one, any elaborate discussion on the subject was out of the question as long as the "material base" of such a discussion was absent, i.e., as long as the working class had not seized political power and established its dictatorship. This material base was created in Russia after the October Revolution and, indeed, an extensive and animated debate took place in Russia in the twenties on the economic problems of the transition period between capitalism and socialism.[1]* Beginning with the thirties the discussion, by and large, ceased until it was revived in the early fifties by Stalin who, however, raised questions more than answering them.[2] Later, the "socialist" economists were more concerned with the technical problems of the functioning of the economy than with the broad questions about the transformation of one social formation into another. Recently, however, outstanding work on this subject has been done by the well-known French economist Charles Bettelheim.[3] Though the two books containing the work are closely connected, we shall be mainly concerned in our discusion below with the second book, as it contains the most es-

This is a revised version of a paper originally published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), special number (July 1971). The author teaches economics at the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta.

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

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sential elements of the first, enriches them, and ultimately goes beyond them.

Considering the importance of the work and its unavailability in English, we shall first give a rather extended summary of the argument in Part I and then add some of our own observations in Part II.

Part I

(1)

The basis of the whole discussion is the following characterization by Bettelheim of the transitional phase between capitalism and socialism:

> The specific form of the "non-correspondence" [between the forces of production and the relations of production] of the transitional phase to socialism is that the mode of *ownership* is formally—for the principal means of production—that of the whole society while the mode of real *appropriation* is still that of limited collective bodies of workers, for it is only at the level of these collectives that the real appropriation of nature takes place.[4]

For a clear understanding of the problem, Bettelheim starts by referring to Engels' emphasis on the necessity of economic calculation in the interest of socialist economic planning. He specifically cites Engels' famous statement—made in the course of his polemic against Dühring—on the necessity of comparing different useful objects among themselves in relation to the quantities of labor that have gone into their production. Engels, as is well known, added that the necessary calculation in a socialist society will be effected directly, and not indirectly through the intervention of commodities and, consequently, value.

Needless to say, such is not the case today with the economy of any country that calls itself socialist. Economic calculations are not effected there by *directly* calculating the labor times but through the intermediary of commodity and value categories. Such practice, Bettelheim points out, should in fact be called "monetary calculation" (MC) and not "economic calculation" (EC)—the former referring to a unit of account which intervenes in acts of exchange, thereby implying commodity and value categories; and the latter referring to the

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measurement either of the expenditure of useful labor or of the social utility of different outputs or activities without having resort to commodity/value categories. In present-day so-called socialist countries MC dominates EC.

Earlier we referred to the necessity, in order to establish a socialist plan, of finding some means of comparing the useful social objects among themselves and of relating them to the quantities of labor necessary for their production. It is, however, only by making abstraction of their qualitative differences that qualitatively different useful objects can be compared and measured. But for such an abstraction to result in effective measures it is necessary that "useful effects" should possess something in common. What makes such qualitative abstraction possible is precisely because the useful effects are a part of *socially organized production and consumption*. This is their common characteristic.

Bettelheim raises an important theoretical point: in the capitalist mode of production (CMP) the quantity of socially necessary labor, the measure of value, is *socially necessary* only with reference to the *appropriation* of *surplus labor*, so that under CMP the "social utility" of different kinds of labor is manifested only through their capacity to produce or to increase surplus value (hence the "rationality" of the profit criterion for CMP); under the socialist mode of production (SMP) the aim of production is no longer the appropriation of surplus value but the satisfaction of social needs. The concept of "socially necessary labor" under SMP does not refer to the production of surplus value but to the "social utility" produced by different kinds of labor. However, in Bettelheim's words, "it remains to make explicit the system of concepts and the methods by which one can *measure the social utility* of different kinds of labor and products . . . *in order to regulate, on the basis of this measure,* the distribution of labors (i.e., of social labor) among different productions."[5] But at the moment, there are, the author points out, serious obstacles in the way of a solution of the problem of what he calls "social economic calculation" (SEC). These obstacles are both *objective* and *subjective*. The objective obstacles arise from the persistence of commodity production in the transitional social formations, which is due on the

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one hand to the low level of the productive forces and on the other hand to the nature of the relations of production themselves which, in large part, continue to be commodity relations. Commodity relations give rise to "monetary magnitudes" through the market. The necessity of devising the SEC has not been felt because of the objective possibility of resorting to these monetary magnitudes which are spontaneously given, thanks to market prices or valuations derived therefrom. With the increasing socialization of the productive forces the necessity of constructing a theoretical framework *for a calculation independently of the market* will be *felt* because the objective conditions for the existence of commodity categories will be eliminated in the different sectors with the result that the reference points furnished by the market will also disappear.

The subjective obstacles to the solution of the problem of SEC are basically two: (a) since Marx's theory of value was constructed through a radical criticism of all attempts to explain "exchange value" by "use value," many Marxist economists have thought that economic calculation could be effected by making abstraction of use value; and (b) since the so-called marginalist "revolution" in economics in the nineteenth century was almost avowedly anti-Marxist, the Marxist economists justly criticized its theoretical-ideological content. But while criticizing the marginalists, many of them incorrectly denied the value of all marginal calculation in economics, overlooked the validity of the application of differential calculus, and at least indirectly failed to understand the necessity of genuine economic calculation in the interest of social development.

The objective obstacles are, however, primary and the subjective secondary. The fact that the value form is very much present in the transitional societies, says the author, proves that these societies are not yet fully socialist. The value form represents certain definite social relations and appears only when those social relations exist. Value is indissolubly linked with commodities and cannot exist in their absence. A basic difference between the classical economists and Marx is that while they analyzed value and its magnitude and showed what the value form simultaneously reveals and conceals—that is, labor and labor time—they, unlike Marx, did not inquire as to why

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the labor time and the relations among the labor times of different products are manifested through the form of value and not directly as such.

What, then, are the definite social relations the existence of which explains the persistence of the value form in the transitional society after the elimination of private property in the means of production? The essence of the answer is contained in the following sentence by Marx cited by the author: "In general the objects of utility become commodities only because they are the products of the independently operated labor of private individuals."[6]

(2)

On the question of the persistence of the commodity/value categories in the transitional social formations, the traditional theoretical response has been, in the main, that the categories subsist because several forms of property in the means of production continue in effect in these social formations: state property, collective property of cooperatives, and sometimes private property. The persistence of the commodity/value categories is thus explained by the consequent acts of exchange among these different owners. This was substantially the reply given by Preobrazhensky in the twenties,[7] and by Stalin a quarter of a century later.[8] This is also more or less the explanation current in the contemporary "socialist" countries. To the further question as to why the commodity categories and commodity relations continued to exist within the state sector itself—as is the case with the exchange of the means of production among the state enterprises—Stalin simply denied their commodity character and pointed out that the existence of value categories connected with such exchanges was determined by the necessity of accounting and calculation. This is of course begging the question, because the problem is precisely why it is necessary to resort to calculation in terms of *value* and why, within the state sector itself, it is not possible to effect the calculation in the sense of Engels, referred to earlier.

The problem to be resolved is the following: Since the commodity forms exist within the state sector, what are the

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specific social relations that these forms conceal and, at the same time, reveal? And why do these social relations not appear *as they are* but rather manifest themselves through what Marx called the "fantasmagoric form of a relation between things"?

According to Marx, whom we cited earlier, commodities are not necessarily related to private property, but only to the existence of the labor of private individuals operating independently.

Bettelheim attaches great importance to the distinction between *ownership* and *possession* that each type of production relation involves. Ownership signifies the *power* to put the objects in its domain, specially the means of production, to given uses and to dispose of the products obtained. Possession is constituted by the *capacity* to put the means of production to work.

Private property as a production relation corresponds to the power of a category of agents to put certain means of production to given uses and to dispose of the resulting products. If the means of production are owned by a multiplicity of separate proprietors, the ownership is called "individual." If a number of proprietors act together as a unit, the ownership is "collective."

Marx pointed out a series of contradictions engendered by the *private* ownership of the *social* means of production and the obstacles that private property puts in the way of development of the productive forces. Basically these obstacles are created by private property insofar as it constitutes a *legal relation.* Marx also pointed out that in part the obstacles are eliminated by the changed legal forms of "social capitalist property," such as joint stock companies or the property of the capitalist state. However, these legal forms of "social property"—*even that of the state*—leave intact the *private* character of capitalist property (which is then "social" capitalist property in opposition to "individual" capitalist property). The development of "social" legal forms of capitalist property entails the *dissociation of the agents of property from those of possession,* for the capacity to put to work the means of production is situated at the level of *different* enterprises which could belong to the *same* capitalist. In this case, the managers of these enterprises are also the ad-

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ministrators of capital; and what takes place with regard to the circulation of products among different enterprises—belonging to a single capitalist, a group of capitalists, or the state—is nothing but the *circulation of commodities* mediated by their *exchange value.*

(3)

From what has been said above, the following proposition can be laid down: the existence of the value form in the transitional societies is rooted in a certain structure of the relations and forces of production such that the different production processes can be dominated only *separately* at the level of the diverse units of production. The units of production which exercise this domination over the separate processes, that is, which have the capacity of effectively controlling the processes of appropriation of nature, are the *possessors of the means of production.* In the "socialist" countries these units of production are the *enterprises* whose directors (appointed by the state in the state sector), and *not the workers,* effectively possess the means of production and dispose of the products, though within limits set by the state ownership. This is the basis of commodity exchange among production units in these countries.

The powers of appropriation and disposition exercised over means of production and products by the state—even a proletarian state—constitute an effect of the *socialist* relations of production only to the extent that their powers ensure *really*—and not simply *formally*—the domination of the workers over the conditions of production and reproduction. In this connection, Bettelheim points out that the people's communes in China, by virtue of the fact of the effective domination by the workers over the means of production and the disposal of products, and by virtue of the fact that they are not simply economic units but also political units in which political and social requirements take precedence over economic requirements, constitute more advanced socialist production relations than those arising from "pure and simple" state ownership.

The capitalist character of the enterprise shows itself in that its structure assumes the form of a *double separation*: the

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separation of the workers from the means of production—possessed in fact by the managers of the enterprise—and the separation of one enterprise from the others.

At the level of labor relations, the capitalist character of the enterprise shows itself in the fact that the workers can be dismissed when necessary and are obliged to find new jobs. Though the conditions of dismissal under a workers' state are stringent, this does not basically alter the *wage labor* character of the relations between the worker and the enterprise. At the ideological and political level also, the "enterprise" ensures the separation of workers from the means of production by (a) the authority of the director, (b) the internal hierarchical organization of the enterprise, and (c) the division between mental and physical labor.

A transitional society with state ownership—under which the enterprises are connected by commodity relations and are operated by wage-labor with a view to reproducing and increasing *value*—is aptly called by Bettelheim *state capitalism* (in a sense different from that originally given to the term by Lenin). This concept is extremely helpful in explaining the idea of the "capitalist road" and in understanding that such a road can be taken at any time by a transitional social formation.

The *domination* of capitalist relations by socialist relations—in a transitional society—excludes exploitation of the workers, but the very *existence* of capitalist relations implies the possibility of restoration of capitalism, that is, the exploitation of workers by those who control the employment of the means of production. The units of production under the commodity system enter into relations with one another through their *products* and not through the *labor* that goes into their production. It is precisely this character of commodity production which, under this system, prevents a veritable economic calculation, a direct measure of socially necessary labor. In its turn, the existence of commodity and capitalist relations in the transitional economies is linked with the existence of a plurality of "enterprises." The presence of these different production units in a transitional society is of course not fortuitous. It corresponds to the *existing* level of the productive forces. The level of the productive forces is such that though the ownership of

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the means of production can be effected centrally by the state—in the state sector—their *possession,* in the sense of the capacity to put them to work, can be effectively exercised only at the level of the "enterprise." Their presence, secondly, corresponds to the sum of social relations inherited from capitalism, and they tend to reproduce these relations. The latter can be radically transformed only through economic, political, and ideological struggles; and this transformation, which at the same time signifies the end of the transitional period, can only be the historical result of such struggles victoriously conducted.

The enterprise is not the only institution that allows the reproduction of capitalist social relations in a transitional society. Those relations are reproduced also with the help of (a) an existing world capitalist system, and (b) the continued existence of a state apparatus in the transitional period. The first operates through importation of part of the means of production as *commodities,* and through the production by the "socialist" enterprises for the world market. The second operates through the existence of a centralized state power, characterized by Lenin in 1920 as "the workers state with bureaucratic distortions," which can serve as the place where means of repression directed against the workers are formed. In fact the real significance of state ownership depends on the relations existing between the mass of workers and the state apparatus. If this apparatus is truly and *concretely* dominated by the workers, state ownership becomes the legal form of the social ownership of the workers. On the other hand, if the workers do not dominate the state apparaus, if the latter is dominated by a body of officials and administrators, then this body effectively becomes the owner of the means of production. This body then forms a *social class*—the "state bourgeoisie"—because of the relation it bears to the means of production on the one hand and to workers on the other.

(4)

In the transitional social formations, the fact that units of production take the form of "enterprises" implies the transitory maintenance of modes of reproduction of the material and social conditions of production similar to those which character-

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ize capitalism. (We say "similar" and not "identical," because of the existence of the proletarian state and its actions from the very beginning.) A more radical transformation in the conditions of reproduction requires either that the units of production no longer take the form of "enterprises," or that the functioning of the latter be revolutionized. Bettelheim points out that at the present time units of production that are not "enterprises" are to be found in the people's communes of China.

Dominance of state ownership over the possession exercised by the units of production operates basically through the plan which is the principal instrument for the social direction of the economy. Whether the society will march towards socialism or revert to capitalism depends on the evolution of this *ownership/possession duality* in the transitional society. Planning in such a society signifies the domination of the political level over the economic level. The economic level, thereby, does not cease to be the determining factor ultimately, but this determining role is played through the intermediary of the political level.

Reference was made above to the possibility of the transitional social formation's reverting to the capitalist social formation. Objectively this possibility arises from the non-correspondence between the relations of real appropriation and the relations of property. One could add that this non-correspondence reflects basically the contradiction between the relations of production and the forces of production that continues to exist even after the conquest of political power by the proletariat. As between the two, relations of production play the *dominating* role, while the forces of production ultimately play the *determining* role. It is the characteristic of the transitional period that the relations of production are in advance of the forces of production, and as long as the latter are not transformed under the domination of the former the transitional period does not end.

One of the manifestations of the non-correspondence between the property relations and the relations of appropriation is the superposition of state property in the means of production over the possession of the means of production by the production units. When the social institutions under the direct aegis

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of the state, e.g., the organs of planning, seek to *determine* the tasks of the production units, one can say that state ownership intervenes as a *relation of production*. If this latter relation is dominant, it is no longer the *law of value* that dominates production but the *law of social regulation of the economy*. This is the specific law of reproduction and transformation in the transitional period. This law itself is the result of the conflict and the combination in the transitional society of two antagonistic laws—the law of value and the *law of social direction of the economy*. The latter law cannot work exclusively until the conditions for the existence of commodity relations have disappeared.

Thus, during the transitional period even though the *law of value* does not regulate production through "market prices," the *value form* is utilized in those aspects of production which cannot yet be brought under immediate social direction. In these circumstances to wish to "suppress" money and prices is to ignore the specific structure of the transitional economy. On the other hand, to refuse to subject money and price to the requirements of the plan is also and equally to ignore the specific structure of the transitional economy. It is to refuse to let the ownership of the proletarian state intervene in the economy. It is to allow the possession of the means of production to be transformed into their ownership by separate enterprises, opening thus the road back to capitalist production relations.

Part II

(1)

To appreciate Bettelheim's contribution correctly, one must have some idea of the present state of the debate on the subject under consideration. We can only touch upon the points that are fundamental.

One can clearly see, in the bulk of the writings on "socialist economics," either of the two following mistakes: (a) propositions that are valid for a socialist society have been taken as valid for a transitional society, and (b) propositions that are valid for a transitional society have been taken as valid for a socialist society.

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Nikolai Bukharin and, to a certain extent, Rosa Luxemburg are perhaps the most important representatives of the first mistake.

Under the impact of War Communism in Russia, Bukharin wrote one of his major works—a book on the economics of the transition period. He pointed out that, after the proletarian revolution, as soon as there is an organized national economy, "all the basic 'problems' of political economy such as value, price, profit, etc., simply disappear . . . the commodity becomes a general category only in a situation where we have a permanent and not accidental social relation based on anarchist production. Hence, as soon as the irrationality of the production process disappears, i.e., as soon as spontaneity is replaced by a conscious social regulator, 'commodity' becomes simply 'product.' "[9] He added that the same thing happens to "value." For "value" is a concept of the commodity-capitalist order in a state of equilibrium and, as a result of the disappearance of both commodity production and equilibrium, becomes inapplicable in the transitional period.[10] Bukharin carried this logic so far as to equate the science of political economy with the science of commodity production and hence to declare that "the end of capitalist and commodity society signifies the end of political economy."[11] Some years earlier, Rosa Luxemburg, following the same logic, had defined political economy along similar lines. She stressed that "the moment the anarchical economy of capitalism is replaced by an economy that is planned, consciously organized, and directed by the whole of the laboring society, political economy finishes its role as science. Therefore the victory of the modern working class and the realization of socialism signify the end of political economy as science."[12] One could add that traces of this line of argument are also to be found in some of the writings of Che Guevara.[13]

The second mistake, has, however, played a more important role in "socialist economics," and foremost among those who have committed it have been academic economists professing socialism. As is well known, some noted economists like Von Mises, Hayek, and Robbins denied the possibility of rational economic calculation in a socialist society in the absence of markets. In their reply, the "socialist" economists *accepted* the

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theoretical position of their opponents and agreed that the system of valuations on which rational economic calculation depended was only possible on the basis of the market. What they denied was that a market system was incompatible with socialism. In fact, they emphasized the need for a socialist society to have markets for the purpose of rational economic calculation. Among them Oskar Lange, however, made a distinction between the market for consumer goods and the market for intermediate goods and capital. While the second was rejected, the existence of the first was emphasized for socialism. "In the socialist system," he wrote, "we have a *genuine* market for consumer goods and for the services of labor. But there is no market for capital goods and productive resources outside of labor."[14] The basis of rational economic calculation for capital and non-labor productive services, Lange asserted, was of course prices, though these prices would not be utilized in any actual transaction and would only be "accounting prices" reached through a process of trial and error.

It is evident that Lange's analysis of rational economic calculation in a socialist society, whether on the basis of market prices or "accounting prices," did not go beyond the commodity/value forms. Two decades later he still held the same position and became rather more categorical. "Products become commodities and become subject to the operation of the law of value," he wrote, "when they change owners. That happens under a socialist economy. Thus the law of value operates in a socialist society."[15] This position of course has nothing to do with what Engels meant by direct economic calculation in a socialist society, and applies rather to the transitional society between capitalism and socialism.

Similarly, when Paul Sweezy wrote that "we are not suggesting that production for profit can be immediately abolished, still less that a *socialist society* can hope to dispense with market relations in any near future,"[16] he was evidently not referring to the possibility of direct economic calculation in socialism in the sense of Engels but only describing what happens in a transitional society.

Most untenable is the position of Maurice Dobb. "There is no reason to suppose," he wrote, "that a free consumers'

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market . . . would not exist in a socialist economy. . . . Marx, it is true, referred to a 'higher stage of socialism' or communism where income should be distributed 'to each according to his needs,' without the intervention of the pricing system. . . . But in what he termed 'the first or lower stage of socialism' different money wages would be paid in proportion to different qualities and quantities of work performed, . . . and there would naturally be a free consumers' market where such money incomes could be spent."[17] Almost twenty years later, Dobb was still maintaining that an essential feature of "socialism" (also referred to as "the first or lower stage of communism") was "its wage system."[18]

First of all, Marx spoke not of lower and higher stages of "socialism" but of "communism."[19] Actually, as Lenin emphasized, what is usually called "socialism" constitutes Marx's "first phase of communism."[20] Secondly, the existence of a free consumers' market in any "stage" of "socialism"—in the sense given above—is absolutely unwarranted by what Marx wrote. "Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the *producers do not exchange their products, [tauschen die Produzenten ihre Produkte nicht aus],*" he wrote.[21] Thirdly, contrary to what Dobb wrote, there is no question of wages even in the "first phase of communism." What the producer in such a phase receives, according to Marx, is "a certificate" showing that he has furnished such and such an amount of labor (after deducting labor for the common fund) and with this certificate "he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labor."[22] This has nothing in common with the wage system, denounced by Marx as "a system of slavery."[23] In fact, to the remark made by Bukharin—in the work previously mentioned—that in the *transitional period* itself "the workers receive a socially determined ration and not wages," Lenin observed: "Right, very well said and without ambiguity."[24] Thus Dobb's position is a step backward, compared even to Bukharin's.

All this amounts to a dangerous confusion of the transitional society between capitalism and socialism with the socialist society itself. That the society in the transitional period is not yet socialism follows directly from the meaning of the ex-

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pression "first phase of communism," as given by Lenin, and Marx's clear characterization of the period in question as "the period of revolutionary transformation" lying "between capitalist and communist society."[25] That the transitional society in question (the political form of which is the "dictatorship of the proletariat") is not in any way identical with socialism is also clear from the following quotation from Lenin: "Between capitalism and communism [evidently including its first phase] there lies a definite transition period. The latter cannot but combine the features and properties of both these systems of social enterprise. This transition period cannot but be a period of struggle between moribund capitalism and nascent communism."[26] And further, "socialism means the abolition of classes. . . . This cannot be done at once . . . classes remain and will remain in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat. When classes disappear the dictatorship will become unnecessary."[27]

Though it is true almost by definition that there is no "Chinese wall" between the transitional society in question and socialism, and that the former grows into the latter, provided certain conditions are fulfilled, it is also important not to confuse the two distinct historical stages. The confusion leads either to the neglect of the specific tasks of the transitional period—that is, preparation of the material base for the "first phase of communism" by eliminating the elements of capitalism and strengthening the elements of socialism—or to the complacent and dangerous notion that the society being already socialist, elements of capitalism have been eliminated and the danger of historical *reversal* no longer exists. In either case, the result is a negation of "the significance of *dictatorship* of the proletariat in the *economic* sphere," as Lenin wrote one year after the October Revolution.[28]

(2)

It is only in the light of the state of the discussion which has just been summarized that one can really appreciate Bettelheim's pathbreaking work and recognize that it really constitutes a "great leap forward" compared specially to what has been done in this area by academic economists professing Marxism. Though the structure of his work follows basically from the

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classics of Marxism-Leninism, it is in its own right a *creative* development of Marxism-Leninism in its application to the analysis of the economic problems of the transitional society. At first sight the work may appear to some—foremost among them being the narrow "specialists" in the profession, the inheritors of what Marx called "vulgar economics"—as a futile exercise in semantics. That of course would be a great mistake. Undoubtedly the work will present some difficulties to those who are ignorant of the Marxist method in general and of Marxist economic categories in particular. And if occasionally the author's argument seems a little involved or somewhat repetitious, that is only because he is embarking on a pioneering, pathbreaking enterprise.

Economists professing Marxism—apart from theoretically confusing the transitional society with socialism—have by and large held what in fact follows from this confusion, that a country becomes socialist immediately after the successful proletarian revolution—a position that Lenin was assailing when, referring to post-revolutionary Russia, he wrote that "the present system contains elements, particles, fragments of *both* capitalism and socialism," and that "the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the *transition to socialism* and not that the new economic system *is* recognized as *socialist order*."[29] Alternatively, these economists have accepted, quite undialectically, as *inevitable* a country's march to socialism once political power has been captured by the proletariat. The possibility of a *reversal* to capitalism for such a country (except in the case of an imperialist invasion) was outside their grasp, in spite of the broad indications to that effect given by Lenin himself in his various writings, specially toward the end of his life. The experience of the construction of socialism—with its positive and negative sides—during the last half century has left them surprisingly unaffected. In fact, besides Bettelheim, Sweezy seems to have been the only well-known economist who has been trying to raise some of the related questions.[30] Now Bettelheim has come forward with a complete conceptual framework necessary for a proper analysis of the possible direction that a transitional society could take—either forward to socialism or backward to capitalism.

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SOCIALISTS AND LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES

BY PAUL LE BLANC

Wells Keddie's discussion of "Socialist Academics and Labor" (MONTHLY REVIEW, February 1972) notes that no revolution is conceivable in this country without working class participation, and it urges socialists to adopt a "trade union approach." The article expresses important ideas clearly and concisely, with suggestions for concrete action, and should greatly contribute to the thinking of many socialist activists. At the same time, it raises many questions which must be explored in greater depth—questions on the relation of socialists to the labor movement, on the nature of trade unionism, on the relation of reform to revolution, etc. Perhaps the following discussion can contribute to the process of clarifying such problems.

I

Once, while still a syndicalist, William Z. Foster spoke of "the spontaneously revolutionary character of trade unionism as such, regardless of its expressed conservative ideology." This happy assumption was widespread on the American Left for many years, even among many who explicitly rejected syndicalism. Even a sophisticated ex-socialist like Daniel Bell tended to see the union as "a social force which by its own position in an industrial hierarchy becomes a challenge to managerial power and changes the locus of power in capitalism."

Yet the 1950s saw the collapse of the American Left and a general stagnation within the AFL-CIO; and trade-union and corporate bureaucracies began to emphasize that they were "partners in progress." The "New Left" which emerged in the early 1960s, consequently, started off with a skeptical attitude toward what C. Wright Mills dubbed the traditional "labor metaphysic

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of Victorian Marxism." As time went on, new leftists tended to agree with Herbert Marcuse that advanced capitalist society "succeeds in absorbing all revolutionary potential" of the working class and that "the majority of organized labor shares the stabilizing, counter-revolutionary needs of the middle classes, as evidenced by their behavior as consumers of the material and cultural merchandise, by their emotional revulsion against the nonconformist intelligentsia."

On the other hand, since 1968 many new-left activists—in their increasingly serious efforts to develop a revolutionary strategy—have begun to point to insurgent workers' activity in Europe and America as the wave of the future. There seem to be at least three major approaches to the question. Some new-left socialists seem to have adopted the following perspective: (a) it's necessary to take power so that we can establish socialism; (b) the working class is a powerful force, and if it supports us, we'll be able to take power; therefore (c) in order to get the workers on our side, we've got to do something to establish friendly relations with them, like support their unions and strikes. Other new-left socialists agree with the first two points but disagree with the third, arguing that trade unions are now (and probably always have been) anti-revolutionary institutions which integrate workers into the capitalist system, being the means through which they're bought off and controlled; this second new-left current tends to be vague, however, on just how the workers can be won over to socialism.

More traditional socialists might feel somewhat uneasy with such attitudes, seeing in them a disturbing elitism which turns traditional perspectives upside down. After all, modern socialism took shape *as a result* of intense workers' struggles. It became a powerful force because it was an integral part of the labor movement, representing a hoped-for ultimate triumph of that movement. The oppression and struggles of working people seemed to point to the necessity of socialism, which was to mean the workers taking power themselves. Many of today's activists, on the other hand, have come to a commitment to socialism independently of any commitments to the labor movement or the specific, ongoing struggles of the working class. Only by mechanistically seeking an "agency" to bring about the desired end have they begun to consider the revolutionary possibilities of the working class. They still fail to see that the situation and struggles of working people are inseparable from the necessity of socialism. Instead, the work-

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ers are seen as a mighty weapon—a tool—which could put revolutionaries into power.

The two new-left currents we've been discussing are both inclined to see the working class as an abstract force to be led by revolutionaries, but they differ in their estimate of unions and union struggles. A third new-left tendency, sometimes using the title "libertarian communist," offers a fundamentally different perspective. Socialism can come about, it is argued, only on the basis of the spontaneous "self-activity" of the workers struggling against their own oppression and seizing control of the economy with their own hands. Elites of revolutionaries or trade-union bureaucracies, it is insisted, can only inhibit, contain, or divert the profoundly revolutionary instincts and inclinations of the workers.

But this perspective is also inadequate. The historical record suggests that capitalist society periodically undergoes periods of instability and crisis which generate massive discontent and a dramatic decline of confidence in established authority. Such periods open up tremendous possibilities for mass action and mass radicalization, and it has been in such periods that socialists and trade unionists alike have made their most dramatic organizational and political gains. But more often than not a new equilibrium is attained (sometimes with the aid of war, authoritarianism, welfarism, or combinations of these). Conservative social and cultural influences, temporarily ruptured, once again assert themselves to ensure social cohesion. If the trade unions and radical organizations have failed to establish strong structures and deep-rooted popular support, they may be wrecked in a wave of reaction. Otherwise, they may be integrated into the new status quo.

Two points emerge from this analysis which challenge the "libertarian communist" view. First, the tendency of trade unions and left-wing organizations to become integrated into the status quo might best be understood within an historical context; their functioning may change as their context changes. In a period of deepening crisis they might play a revolutionary role; in a period of social stability they would tend to play an integrative role. Second, even under the most opportune circumstances, the instincts and inclinations of the workers have not—by themselves—been capable of bringing about a socialist revolution. A new equilibrium can be attained within the old framework of society only because *not enough people believe in the existence of a viable alternative.* This suggests that (a) the workers as a whole can't spontaneously

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concoct such an alternative, and therefore (b) there is a need for organizations capable of formulating, articulating, and mobilizing for the realization of such an alternative.

In fact, it should be clear that the working class (defined as those who make their living not through the ownership of businesses but through the sale of labor power—including those with blue and white collars, as well as the unemployed subsisting on welfare) is characterized by extreme diversification and even stratification. There are different forms of oppression and exploitation, different standards of living, different life-styles and cultural patterns, and varying degrees of class consciousness. As one astute sociologist (Harold Wilensky) emphasizes, "even unionized workers divide in age, sex, seniority, and skill lines, not to mention the division by religion, nationality, and race. Union or non-union American workers display much diversity in values, beliefs, and ways of life."

The creation of class solidarity and the creation of unity around a common goal and strategy among major segments of the working class could hardly be a "spontaneous" happening. It is a complex process which cannot take place without the initiative and the substantial, sustained input of those who are committed to such a process. Those "libertarian communists" who point to the French events of May 1968 as a vindication of the "spontaneity" dogma actually prove our point. First of all, we must recognize that the creation of widespread socialist consciousness—a precondition for the French upheaval—was the result of many years of agitation, education, and activity carried on by the traditional organizations of the Left. Second, the spontaneity by itself was unable to overcome the bureaucratic conservatism of the traditional left-wing organizations or to lead decisive segments of the population into a final confrontation with the forces of the status quo. At the decisive moment, no one was in a position to communicate a viable alternative. The revolutionary moment passed, followed by mild reforms, repressions, and electoral setbacks for the left parties (along with confusion and demoralization among the revolutionary grouplets). A new equilibrium has been achieved for the time being.

II

What we have dubbed the "syndicalist" tendency of the American Left should not be passed over too quickly; chances are that it will continue to assert itself. After all, trade unions are the only significant and lasting organizations which large numbers of Amer-

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ican workers have formed for their self-defense against capitalist oppression. And because they are the only organizations in our society which involve workers defending their own interests through collective struggle, they are naturally of great importance to the workers themselves and should be respected by revolutionary socialists. Indeed, they seem to be the only form through which activists can relate to the American working class as an organized force.

Beyond this, it could be argued—strictly from the standpoint of sophisticated trade unionsm—that a narrow "business unionism" leads to stagnation and decline, that unions must ultimately develop along revolutionary lines or perish. As one leftish socialist and trade unionist (J. B. S. Hardman) once pointed out, "trade unions need power in order to materialize their most immediate daily objectives." He went on to argue that within "a social order in which groups and classes contend for power," the failure of unions to utilize their power and, in the process, to expand their power, would mean inevitable decline. "Vital trade unionism is obliged, under threat of counterattack, to think of ultimate objectives, if it means to prosecute its immediate objectives."

The facts seem to bear this out. In confining itself to a "business union" perspective (modified only by a dependence on the mildly reformist Democratic party), the AFL-CIO has tended, in the recent words of one labor economist (Ben B. Seligman), to become a shell of its former self, "top-heavy with officialdom, excellently financed, but reduced in size and national influence," representing "an entrenched but dwindling minority and . . . cut off from—if not violently at odds with—the lower, poorer strata of the working class." The number of unionized workers in the 1950s was about 34 percent of the non-agricultural labor force; it now stands at about 28 percent. The "new economic policy," supported in its essentials even by labor's "friends" in the Democratic Party, dramatizes the growing vulnerability of "business unionism."

Also, sectors of the labor force which are increasing in size and importance—blacks, women, and youth—are at the same time being most inadequately protected by the benefits provided by "business unionism." Moreover, these groups have recently contained the most volatile sections of the population as a whole. The rebelliousness of young workers has been especially noted by employers and union officials alike. Many of those entering the labor force have been affected by the mass radicalization of the 1960s. It seems probable that labor unrest and insurgency—already grow-

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ing in the past few years—will dramatically erupt in the future, especially in the face of the many persisting crises of American society.

This becomes even more exciting as we realize that we revolutionary socialists of America—unlike so many of the revolutionary intellectuals of the past—are for the most part not outsiders but are ourselves an integral part of the working class, that we can and should be organized along trade union lines in the places where we work. Indeed, unionization of teachers, service workers, and public employees is on the increase. As Wells Keddie so aptly put it, "once socialists begin to understand where *their* class interests lie, they can begin *in fact* to make the 'struggles of the people' their own."

III

Yet there is a danger here. Those new leftists and "libertarian communists" who have pointed to the inherently conservative nature of trade unionism have, in fact, identified an important aspect of reality (erroneously seeing this, however, in static and absolute terms).

"Every union," Wells Keddie has noted, "regardless of its ideological orientation, deals with employers as if the existing system were here to stay." They are "created as agents of defense . . . preoccupied with the daily chores of dealing with management." This is the conservative essence of trade unionism, and even the most socialist-minded trade union leaders are affected by it. As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out more than 60 years ago, they are "constantly absorbed in the economic guerrilla war whose plausible task is to make the workers place the highest value on the smallest economic achievement."

No matter how necessary this is for the defense of the workers' specific conditions, Luxemburg argued, it tends to result in union leaders losing "the power of seeing the larger connections and of taking a survey of the whole position." Developing on the basis of "disconnected economic struggles in a peaceful period," the consequent "specialization of professional activity as trade union leaders" naturally gives rise to "bureaucratism and a certain narrowness of outlook." This, in turn, leads to other harmful tendencies:

> There is first of all the overvaluation of the organization, which from a means has gradually been changed into an end in itself, a precious thing, to which the interests of the struggle should be subordinated. From this also comes the openly admitted need

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for peace which shrinks from great risks and presumed dangers to the stability of the trade unions, and further, the overvaluation of the trade-union method of struggle itself, its prospects and its successes.

Luxemburg believed that such bureaucratic-conservative tendencies could be counteracted by the socialist convictions of the workers, the interaction between the unions and the socialist party, and the growing crisis of capitalist society (which would generate revolutionary upsurges, spontaneous "mass strikes," among the workers). Of course, our context, unlike hers, does not contain the realities of widespread socialist consciousness and mass socialist organizations. But Luxemburg's point here is no less relevant to the American experience. Consider, for example, the era of "Debsian socialism."

During the first two decades of this century, when a strong and dynamic Socialist party came into being under the leadership of Eugene V. Debs and established a significant popular base, Socialists became dominant in about one third of the unions in the American Federation of Labor. But government repression crushed the organizational apparatus of the Socialists during the First World War, and this was followed by the internal fragmentation over the question of how to relate to the Bolshevik Revolution. With the wrecking of the organization that had given focus to their trade-union activity, most of the old AFL Socialists felt it necessary to make their peace with the entrenched leaders of the AFL, especially after the collapse of Farmer-Labor party efforts in the early 1920s.

A number of examples can be utilized to demonstrate that socialist consciousness does not *spontaneously* flourish within a trade union context but instead greatly depends upon the existence and vitality of a broader socialist movement. In the absence of interaction with such a movement, individual socialists in the unions can do little more than function as principled trade unionists, and even then they may feel compelled to make certain compromises in order to survive in an often less than "principled" context.

In fact, this points up a more general problem, one which receives inadequate attention in Wells Keddie's article. Keddie calls for socialist academics to function as militant trade unionists and as propagandists for socialist consciousness in the labor movement. But individual socialists in the labor movement, like individual socialists elsewhere, run the risk of functioning like liberal reformists in their practical activity, despite their socialist convic-

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tions and rhetoric. The two dangers facing socialist activists in the United States today are, on the one hand, that of being isolated, exhausted, and destroyed; and on the other hand, that of being absorbed, by default, into liberal structures. We must develop other structures to prevent this, to give continuity and coordination to our efforts. We must be able to maintain a rich pool of collective experience and resources to sustain our effectiveness and integrity in the immense task of building a socialist movement.

Seventy years ago, Lenin took note of these realities and offered the truism that only the most perceptive, courageous, patient, and responsible of the manual and intellectual workers will have the capacity for establishing the groundwork of theoretical understanding and ongoing organizational activity which is the necessary precondition for mass socialist action. These committed activists constitute the revolutionary vanguard. Contrary to popular myth, Lenin didn't see this vanguard as substituting itself for the working class. Rather he envisioned a process of cross-fertilization, a mutual enrichment of the ongoing workers' struggles (including trade-union struggles) and the vanguard's theoretical and practical work.

Rosa Luxemburg polemicized against the Leninist theory of organization because she feared it would create "an airtight partition between the class-conscious nucleus of the proletariat already in the party and its immediate popular environment, the non-party sections of the proletariat." In the United States and elsewhere it has certainly become clear that many a self-proclaimed "vanguard" is little more than an intense little clique, mechanically carrying out "the line" among the masses, incapable of absorbing the insights and experiences of non-members. Yet Luxemburg and the latter-day anti-Leninists fail to provide any coherent or viable alternatives. In light of this, the criticism must be seen not as the beginning and the end of all wisdom on the organizational question, but as a fruitful insight pointing up dangers which members of the revolutionary vanguard must strive to avoid.

Given the correctness of Lenin's theory of organization, the question arises: if trade unions function "as if the existing system were here to stay," merely working for reforms within capitalist society, what role should the revolutionary vanguard play within the labor movement? Should it fight to make the unions revolutionary despite their essential conservatism? Should it fight to draw workers away from unions and into revolutionary organizations somehow? Should it more or less ignore unions? Each of these

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questions demonstrates a basic confusion over the interrelationship between reform and revolution.

A mark of sectarianism is the refusal to accept the legitimacy of struggles for the elementary needs and interests of people as they exist today. But it's through such reform struggles that people gain an awareness that their common problems can be altered through collective action; such struggles advance the political thinking and experience of those involved. More than this, participation in such struggles permits the revolutionary organization to develop itself and to strengthen ties between itself and broader segments of the population.

Marx and Engels argued that such reform struggles should begin to make "despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the conditions of bourgeois production"; and in a similar vein Lenin insisted that "demands for partial concessions" should not be ends in themselves but, instead, should be "raised to the status of a systematic, implacable struggle" for a social transformation. The momentum of such reforms, and of the dynamic socialist and labor movements forcing such reforms, would result in the growing power of a socialist workers movement.

At the same time, as the *Communist Manifesto* suggests, revolutionaries must not try to "set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement." There are no shortcuts to winning people over to a revolutionary socialist perspective. Rather, it is essential that socialists, as they participate in and contribute to such reform struggles, articulate a convincing revolutionary perspective which links the issue or set of issues around which people are struggling to a broader set of issues, to an understanding of the crisis of our society, to an emphasis on the common interests of the entire working class, and to an understanding of the need for socialism.

IV

Given this perspective, and given the objective needs of the American labor movement suggested earlier, it would make sense for socialists in the labor movement (1) to help defend and advance the working conditions and living conditions of the workers, (2) to help organize unorganized workers, (3) to work to re-establish the active participation of the rank-and-file in the workings of the union, (4) to work to build a unionism which actively and seriously grapples with broader social problems that affect all working people, and (5) to work to re-establish a serious commitment to labor solidarity—forging alliances between various

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groups within the working class (including racial and ethnic minorities, women, youth, the unemployed, etc.).

Simply in terms of the nature and needs of trade unionism, such a direction makes sense. At the same time, however, it is crucial to recognize the need for (a) organizational forms which can unite and coordinate the efforts of socialists in the labor movement, (b) broader social movements and struggles which will involve members of the working class, infusing the trade-union movement with fresh, vital ideas and methods of struggle, and (c) a revolutionary organization through which activists can formulate and carry out a nation-wide, multi-issue, multi-sector, multi-tactical strategy.

Also, it should be recognized that the dynamism and instability of capitalism periodically create situations which "change the rules," which cause masses of people to spontaneously challenge the status quo, independently of carefully developed strategies and organizations. If a left-wing organization is unable to adjust to such situations, it becomes irrelevant or even counter-revolutionary. If a left-wing organization is able to orient itself to the new situation and is capable of articulating socialist alternatives and of *mobilizing for* an advance beyond capitalism, then a revolution can take place. Reform struggles—including trade-union activity—can develop the capacities of both the people and the left-wing organization, and they can also help set in motion developments which lead to the spontaneous, popular, revolutionary upsurge.

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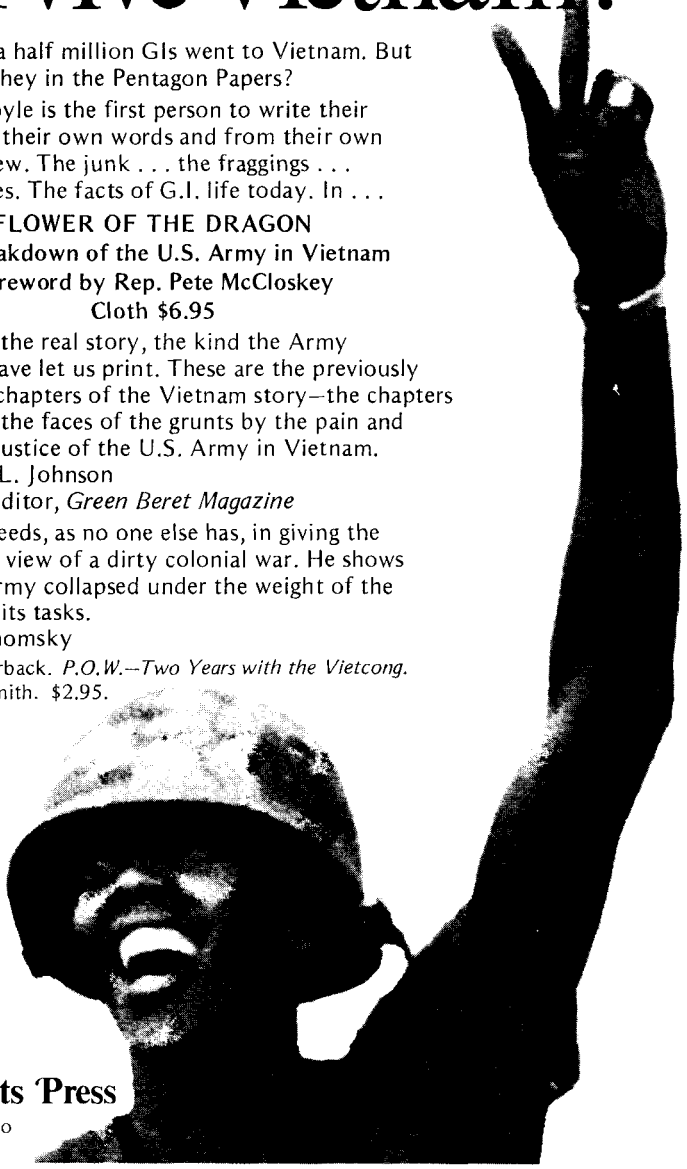

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MARGINAL PRODUCTIVITY, EFFICIENCY, AND POLITICAL INNOCENCE

BY A CORRESPONDENT

If you had to help a blind man get around in the city, would you teach him Braille without furnishing him with a seeing-eye dog? If you were to help a lame man, would you give him a band-aid and not a wheelchair? Naive questions to which the obvious answer is no.

Monograph No. 8, which offers a succinct analysis of the agricultures of eight Latin American countries and makes recommendations about how to improve them, provokes exactly this type of question. Putting it bluntly, it recommends naive and innocuous policy measures which are just not going to do the job. How exactly do policy advisers—and the authors put themselves in the position of volunteer consultants—get themselves into a situation where they recommend the wrong things? The answer is simple again: they ignore reality. Let us describe briefly this little booklet, whose publication was underwritten by the Ford Foundation and whose thirteen contributors seem all to be associated in one way or another with this institution.

Fletcher and Merrill are professors at one of the most famous agricultural colleges in the United States, situated in the richest agricultural state of the country. Having superb soils

These comments on Lehman B. Fletcher and William C. Merrill's *Latin American Agricultural Development and Policies* (International Studies in Economics, Monograph No. 8, Department of Agricultural Economics, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, September 1968) were written by an agricultural economist who has had years of experience with international agencies concerned with problems of Latin American agriculture.

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and all of its farm land under cultivation, Iowa produces a large share of the country's total agricultural output. Its corn yields break records, its swine production outstanding. It claims several cities with important industries. Iowa farmers have been rich for years. Rural unemployment is practically nonexistent. They produce and harvest with an insignificant amount of hired labor, using the most modern machinery and farming methods the world has yet devised. Their major problems—if they can be called problems—are whether to buy a new tractor to replace the two-year old one; whether to plow four inches instead of six, thus saving time and gasoline; whether to shift some acres this season from corn to soybeans or alfalfa; whether to buy additional life insurance; whether to vote Democratic or Republican. It is all a question of making the same or a little more net income and of putting the savings in the right kind of a sock.

Iowa farmers are preoccupied with producing and marketing what they produce. If they decide to buy a tractor, they go to the nearest local bank for credit or dip into their cash reserves, deposited in their savings or other accounts. They want to try out a new seed? The agronomists at the agricultural college will tell them whether it is advisable. Fertilizers and insecticides are delivered to the door of their barns. To market their hogs, they call up a truck-driver or use their own truck and bring them to a packing plant or an auction. They sell their corn to the nearest elevator when they think the price is right. They want to join a cooperative? Sending a check for the membership fee is sufficient. Iowa farm people are happy people.

Now we go to a typical Latin American rural community. Here, in this township, there are five rich men, residing in a capital 400 miles away, who own 90 percent of the farm land, although some of them do not know exactly how much they own. Their land is operated by arrogant farm managers, riding on horseback, armed with guns. Each is surrounded by a small flock of assistants, supervisors, foremen, and book clerks. They give all the orders regarding the daily routine. About 10 percent of their land is in crops; 40 percent in unimproved (native), unfenced pasture, grazed by a herd at the rate of four acres

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per head and supervised by one cowboy; the remainder is unused although it is potentially productive land. The crop land is let out in part to sharecroppers and small tenants, who each have just enough acres of eroded land to provide for a subsistence income (about 30 dollars a month) for them and their numerous offspring, after having paid the customary share to the landlord. If the tenant or sharecropper wants to sell his own share, does he go to the nearest elevator or merchant? No, he is under obligation to sell it to the landlord at the low prices prevailing at harvest. (Usually this is contrary to the law, but who cares?) The landlord then resells that share at a higher price later on and keeps the difference. The men are indebted to their landlords or local moneylenders, because they can never make ends meet with their insufficient incomes. They are forbidden to farm the land in any other manner except as prescribed by the manager, which is at best the manner established two generations ago by the landlord's grandfather. They are forbidden under penalty of dismissal to join a cooperative (if there is one in the area, which is unlikely) and face much more severe punishment if they join a peasant league. No local banker in his right mind would give them a dollar's worth of credit, nor does anybody else, to improve their little plots. If they are dismissed or go to another community, which happens all the time, there are already a hundred poor aspirants for the plot, to work it under identical conditions. But the best cropland is farmed by the landlord himself, perhaps for a cash crop such as cotton, with the help of wage workers who earn 50 miserable cents daily for a 12-hour workday or an average income of 12 dollars a month, if they work every day and are actually paid the promised wage. For every job there are a hundred candidates who have no jobs. One leader tries to unionize the workers since this is permitted by the country's constitution, but he is lucky if he is allowed to leave the area alive. The big landlords prosper because labor is cheap and unorganized.

There is still 10 percent of the farm land in the community unaccounted for. Some of it is owned by a few merchants as weekend resorts or as a source of additional cash income. A tiny proportion—perhaps 2 percent—is owned by innumerable smallholders whose plots are just large enough to accommodate a few

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adobe or straw huts, a few rows of beans, corn, or yucca, and a few chickens to bring in a bit of cash. The adults are busy one or two months of the year, and the rest of the time they wander around in search of a harvest job. They are looking for land to cultivate on their own? There is none available, since it is all occupied by the big landlords. And if there were, who would give them the money to cultivate or buy it?

Meanwhile, in the city, the owners of all the large farms pursue their main professions as bankers, equipment dealers, traders, owners of real estate, or politicians; and their main preoccupation as far as agriculture is concerned, which they direct from 400 miles away, is to leave things as they are. Ownership of farm land provides them with a springboard for political jobs and political influence. They all are members of powerful agricultural associations whose goal is the preservation of the status quo. They sit in parliament and local government, nominate judges, mayors, police chiefs, and army officers, and thus have the means to prevent any significant changes in the rural sector. Rural development is, under these circumstances, difficult at best. The mass of farm people cannot use any initiative to improve production because they are either forbidden to do so or they don't have the means; the owners of the big estates may have the initiative, but don't have to use it because they are already well off.

Now the economists from the rich state of Iowa are let loose in this highly traditional, stagnating, rural society, and the dilemma begins. They find that output is low, productivity per worker or hectare inadequate, the rate of aggregate growth insignificant or, on a per capita basis, perhaps declining, private and public investments in agriculture practically nonexistent. So what do they recommend? Here are their policy recommendations (p. 90): (1) raise productivity, (2) develop adapted agricultural production technology and get it applied, (3) establish consistent and stable government policies toward agriculture, (4) sharpen priorities as to how, where, and by whom output is to be increased, (5) improve trade patterns and policies, (6) organize efficient supply industries, (7) invest in farm people (education), (8) utilize land resources (tax reforms), and (9) reduce marketing losses and improve marketing systems.

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The reader is seized with amazement. Exactly how is all this going to be brought about in a society in which the premium is on the preservation of the status quo rather than on dynamic changes as in Iowa? The authors do not say, and cannot say, because they have not looked at the obstacles to change. This brings us to the "analyses" of the performance of the agricultural economies in the eight countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, and Mexico) on which the recommendations for improving agricultural performance in Latin America are based.

These eight analyses do not sin because of what they report. They present many statistical series—some good, as in the case of Mexico, some bad, as in the case of Venezuela—of output over a period of years; of trade balances; of indices of production of major crops; of areas in cotton, potatoes, rice, or coffee and their regional distribution. They sin because of what they omit. And what they omit is just about everything that makes agriculture in Latin America tick. Nothing is said about land use and why so much land is unused or underutilized and by whom; who owns the land and who has access to it; what effect the cultivation of new areas has on yields and why yields are decreasing in the old farming areas; about the availability of credit, who gets it, and what impact this has on the spreading of innovations; how the distribution of the means of production affects the distribution of incomes; what effect subsistence incomes have on the outlook and performance of the millions of farm people who do all the farm work under orders; what effect the availability of cheap labor has on the chances for introducing technological improvements; what impact the modernization of agriculture (raising productivity, developing adapted agricultural production techniques and getting them applied as proposed in the first and second recommendations above) would have on rural employment and wages when labor relations are feudal; why farm people are uneducated or unorganized and what effect this has on agricultural growth; how and by whom agricultural policies are made, how they are implemented, and who benefits from them. For a publication which devotes itself specifically to agricultural policy matters, these are significant omissions, and purposeful ones too, because *Monograph No. 8* takes the po-

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sition that development is only a matter of more output and greater efficiency.

Chapter 9 of *Monograph No. 8,* for example, deals with Mexico. It is the best contribution to the little volume, because it is a summary of an extensive analysis of Mexican agriculture which its authors (E. Venezian and W. K. Gamble) have published elsewhere. But it evades most of the important policy issues. Admittedly, Mexico is a special case in the general panorama of Latin agriculture. Or is it? At least, it has solved the problem of food production. Or so it seems. Is the further development of its agriculture now only a matter of applying the nine recommendations of *Monograph No. 8* to the fullest, all of which are focused towards more output and efficiency in production and marketing? Or is it perhaps a matter of another land reform? Mexico provides a good demonstration that a nation can multiply its output of food and still have a lot of peasants (and city people) without enough to eat. In other words, its problem is not purely economic, but institutional. But Venezian and Gamble would disagree wholeheartedly. They focus on the miraculous performance of the sector during the past decades, how output of corn, beans, cotton, and wheat increased by leaps and bounds, and on the factors responsible for this astounding growth. Brief mention is made of land reform (no one writing about Mexico can afford to ignore it), but not as one of the factors which made agricultural growth possible. Edmundo Flores demonstrated convincingly, not too long ago, that land reform obliged many landowners to reinvest their earnings in their property after the reform left them with only a small portion (although the best portion) of their former possessions. Of course, at present a vast network of institutions —for credit, subsidies, import or local manufacture of machinery for commercial agriculture, extension and research—is available to fatten the incomes of these landlords or their enterprising successors. But when the authors come to the subject of land reform, they act like a virtuous monk forced to see a daring picture. They virtually ignore the fact that the government gave land (not all of it of good quality) to 300,000 *campesinos* during the 1960s. The problem of access to land is still a crucial one in Mexico. There are over 20 million *campesinos* without land, many of them working at extremely low wages or without

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any work at all. Unemployment is estimated to reach about 30 percent of the active rural labor force. Nothing is said about the urgent need for drastic changes in land tenure, although continuous land invasions and rural conflicts testify to its existence. According to S. Eckstein, 80 percent of all producers are smallholders and only less than one percent of all producers produced 32 percent of the agricultural output in 1960.* This shows clearly the dichotomy of today's Mexican agriculture. Other important issues, which are not primarily economic in nature, are also not mentioned: the impact of the closing of the U.S. frontiers to the *braceros* who yearly returned with millions of dollars to feed their families and capitalize their plots of land on a small scale; or the new "financial latifundio," often with foreign capital, which has crept into Mexican agriculture and threatens to wipe out the benefits of the revolution and land reform of the preceding decades at the expense of the *campesinos*. Nor do the authors mention the urgently needed changes in the land-tenure conditions in irrigation schemes, built with public funds but benefiting to a major degree a small number of private owners who exploit several farms, registered in the name of members of their families or even strangers, as one single enterprise, contrary to the spirit of the Mexican land reform. The decline in production which the break-up of these enterprises would allegedly cause is a myth, because it has been fully demonstrated in recent studies that, contrary to the contention of chapter 9, the *ejidal* (communal) sector, which is the direct result of the Mexican land reform, is as efficient as the private sector, even given its lesser resources. All this implies the need for new policy measures and decisions to be taken at the highest level, in order to eliminate the effects of a highly unequal distribution of resources among the two sectors. But these subjects seem to be taboo for *Monograph No. 8*, since they have nothing to do with marginal productivity and efficiency and therefore fall outside of the realm of interest of economists.

Why does *Monograph No. 8* overlook or sidestep all these important issues? Apparently its authors believe that the main

* *El Marco Macroeconómico del Problema Agrario Mexicano* (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones Agrarias, October 1966).

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burden of agricultural development ought to continue to fall on the few holders of large estates who own most of the farm land, although it has been amply demonstrated that they are in fact the main elements responsible for agricultural stagnation in Latin America. The authors seem to think that if only these estate owners could be made to perform better (meaning: produce more, and more efficiently) by some *deus ex machina,* all the major problems of Latin American agriculture, which now make it the main source of social unrest and political violence, would disappear. This is, indeed, exactly what the authors say. They affirm that agricultural development (in their language the successful application of their nine policy recommendations) may lead to a more equal income distribution in the long-run. (p. 87) Such a statement can only be made by one who is ignorant of how a traditional agriculture operates, because it can be demonstrated with mathematical precision and predicted with the highest degree of accuracy that the modernization of agriculture, with the existing distribution of resources and political power, must inevitably lead to more poverty, more unemployment, and more repressions of the rural masses. In fact this is exactly what is happening in Latin America today. Those who do not see it do not know what is taking place under their very noses. The nine recommendations of *Monograph No. 8,* if put into practice, would bring about a final crisis in Latin America, not in 25 years but much sooner.

A publication of the agricultural college of Iowa carries some weight. So one must ask: What purpose does this particular publication serve? It wishes to suggest that agricultural development in Latin America can be, and ought to be, brought about by slow, reasonable, mainly "economic"—that is, non-political—measures which do not rock the boat and above all do not aim at modifying the institutional framework of agriculture or affect adversely the interests of the owners of latifundios. Progress in rural Latin America ought to take place along the lines of the peaceful, but still dynamic, development of agriculture in the rich state of Iowa. If it succeeded there, why not in Latin America?

How can this argument be defended? By implying that land reforms in Latin America, which John F. Kennedy's Al-

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liance for Progress regarded as an essential stepping-stone for rural growth, and which sophisticated experts in the field have long believed to be an unavoidable necessity, have been a failure and that land reform can only hurt the peasants. So *Monograph No. 8,* with its innocuous language, is basically a document directed against land reform and is thereby in agreement with the official policies of several Latin American governments.

Now it is absolutely certain that "land reforms" in Latin America, as carried out during the 1960s, have been colossal failures. They had to be failures because they have been carried out, i.e. sabotaged, by the very landed elite (in many cases assisted by the military, which confuses land reform with communism) which was supposed to give up its land for the benefit of the peasants. In this sense, of course, "land reforms" have really not been a failure, because they have aided the landed elite to maintain its political and economic power intact; and the mere handful of peasants who have received land from the so-called land-reform institutes proves it. In this respect *Monograph No. 8* lacks frankness, although it is necessary to read between the lines, or to know the realities of Latin America's agricultural sector, to come to this conclusion. The lack of frankness consists in equating "land reforms" carried out by the estate owners in 1960-1968 with real land reforms which take land away from the estate owners and give it to the peasants. No such real reforms have taken place in this decade, except in Cuba, and if they had, they would in all likelihood not have been failures—from the point of view of the peasants, it goes without saying.

Monograph No. 8 may be valuable as an anti-land-reform document. It makes good reading for rich owners of rural real estate, sitting in their city offices, and shaking their greying heads about all this commotion in the countryside. As a basis for "realistic" measures to bring about prosperity and freedom for Latin American peasants or as a "contribution to the understanding of agricultural and economic development in the Americas" (in the words of the preface) it ought to be quickly forgotten.

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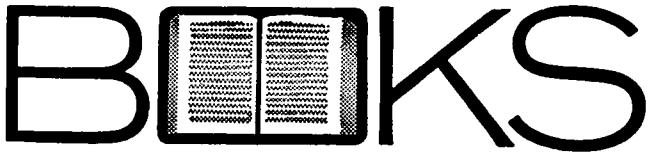

ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPRESSION

BY MICHAEL FRANK

Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community by Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld, Hans Zeisel. Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1971.

This is a reprint of a classical sociological study first published in 1933. The authors describe the effects of the Great Depression on an unemployed European community. The workers are unemployed through no fault of their own. An economic depression is not a natural or scarcity crisis, but a "crisis" of overabundance. The market is glutted with more goods than there is effective demand for. Since the capitalist class sees no possibility for the realization of surplus value, it does not invest and the productive apparatus stagnates. The possibility that "too much" can also constitute a crisis condition clearly shows the irrationality of the economy. The fact that the economy is "depressed" and immobilized at such times is a measure of the crisis in social reason.

The unemployed man is also depressed, and his life activities, leisure activities, and political activities shrink and dwindle. Even those who were formerly part of the political opposition (the Social Democratic party) no longer engage in political activity and discussion. The equal-exchange principle, that productive activity legitimately exchanges for the means of existence, is operating at a deep level of consciousness. This principle of justice is itself an ideology masking and enabling the practice of domination and unequal exchange. The unemployed man is evaluating himself negatively according to a measuring rod of self-worth that oper-

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ates both in the interest of the privileged and more powerful partner and at a level of unconsciousness that immunizes it from the possibility of critical reflection and critical judgment on its validity. It is this binding that constitutes his depression.

The depressions that the unemployed experience are a protective device, from the point of view of capitalist society. The stability of the system is dependent on the translation of the economic crisis (the loss of profit opportunities for the capitalist class) into psychological crises, rather than into revolutionary movements, as the exploitation structure shows itself to be dysfunctional. The time of the glaring dysfunctionality of the exploitation structure is also the time of the lowering of the level of activity of the producers.

The unemployed man unconsciously judges himself as an individual who is lacking and can see no meaningful action to take. The automatically operating equal-exchange principle both devalues his self-image and delegitimizes his activities (politics, leisure, etc.).

The fact that the principle of justice (equal exchange) is an ideology masking and making possible unequal exchange for the benefit of the privileged partner necessitates its operating at a level of consciousness where it is free from the possibility of critical evaluation and reconsideration. This configuration defines repression.

The necessary condition for the possibility of a person's depression is that the standard for self-evaluation and for judging the legitimacy of activities operates automatically and is not subject to reflective control and re-evaluation, or, in psychoanalytic terms, that the superego form of normative regulation is operating.

Economic and psychological depressions are the ills and alienations of pre-communist man.

The modern laborer . . . instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society, as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him.

—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels,
The Communist Manifesto

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CORRESPONDENCE

A RESPONSE TO MERKX'S "REVOLUTION IN AMERICA?"

Sociologists at their most conventional are the chroniclers of systematic contemporary gossip; some do not progress much further even when they "go radical." Sociology, the field that nurtures them, is usually devoid of theoretical basis, is historically shallow, and, when not directly antithetical to Marxism, is certainly ignorant of it. Not surprisingly then, the "radicalization" of sociology has led to a proliferation of social ideas which, while often pretending to be "beyond Marxism," have done little other than add both common and uncommon items to the storehouse of distortions of Marxism. Sociology, perhaps the most popular subject among students on the Left, is at the center of recent attempts to revise Marx, not only in the traditional revisionist manner by renouncing the significance of a revolutionary proletariat, but by embracing a variety of formulations about new non-proletarian "revolutionary" classes. We have been treated to a sophisticated example of this genre in a recent article by Gilbert Merkx called "Revolution in America?" (MR, January 1972).

Merkx is especially struck, as are most "new" theorists, by the cultural crisis which has affected American capitalism in the last decade. With some misgivings, he applies the term "ethnic" to the age, sex, and racial groups which, in response to the crisis, have developed what he calls "new consciousness." At the same time he notes that blue-collar workers are firmly integrated into the capitalist system. The new "countercultures," even with all their problems (many of which Merkx recognizes) are seen by him as the repositories of progressive rejection of capitalism, and the working class as, at best, out of the picture and, at worst (at least by implication), mired in reaction. This new era, in which

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everybody but the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is alienated, has been ushered in by an "increasingly automated economy" which instead of "*incorporating* new population groups . . . has been *expelling* population groups" (emphasis in the original). It is these expelled groups which, he argues, have created and developed the new progressive forms of consciousness. The focus of class contradiction is, thus, no more the point of exploitation *within* the productive process, but rather the point of expulsion *from* the productive process.

In order to have us accept this image of a new and vital rebellion made exclusively by those outside the system, Merkx has to resort to a most spectacular historical sleight-of-hand. Starting from "the first flush of triumphant capitalism after the Civil War, known as the Progressive Era," the system, Merkx maintains, was stable until forces brought on by the depression of the 1930s culminated, in the last two decades, in such changes that "they constitute a major alteration in the class structure." A rosy picture of early triumphant capitalism is buttressed with claims that

> participation in this emergent system rested upon belief that if one accepted its values and rules, one could expect a better life for oneself and one's children. Whether or not this was true in the individual case, it reflected a general growth of prosperity and employment. One did not need an education to find a job. During 1916, fully 90 percent of sixteen-year-old men were already full-time workers. Farmers were still on their farms, laborers were still working, and women were burdened with large families and unmechanized household drudgery.

This particular type of sentimental, distorted impression of history is the stock-in-trade of sociologists; even bourgeois historians would be somewhat appalled by such a summation. Significantly, the author has overlooked, among other things, Haymarket Square and the Molly McGuires, Eugene Debs, Bill Haywood and the Muckrakers; and his oversight is no accident. By ignoring the revolts of small property against monopoly and of labor against capital so characteristic of that era, class conflict is made to disappear, and the dramatic entrance of the "new consciousness" stands in bold relief before us. The temporary weakness of the working class as a revolutionary force is given historical pedigree and is therefore implicitly assumed to be forever with us.

Merkx, however, is not a flagrant romanticizer of the "new consciousness." While finding some merit in the shoddy idealism

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of a Charles Reich, he nevertheless asserts that "every new form of consciousness that has emerged is founded upon and articulates the structural alienation of a social group." His analysis shows some strength in delineating some of the structural bases of these forms of consciousness. But, more significantly, he thinks that this consciousness is *new*—not only in the *de novo* sense, but in the progressive political sense as well. All aspects of cultural rebelliousness, especially if they reject the dominant values of work, consumption, and social aspiration, are assumed to be progressive in their consequences. In the history of capitalism, however, there is nothing unusual about the rejection of cultural values even among the bourgeoisie (for example, the artistic revolt against commercialism or the bohemian revolt against the struggle for money). The author himself states that "the new forms of consciousness seldom are based upon analysis of the class situation. Alterations of the class structure have not produced class consciousness, but instead other forms of consciousness which can loosely be called ethnic." The theoretical defender of this consciousness recognizes that it has little class content but at the same time he extols its progressive militancy.

But, it must be asked, are these age, sex, and racial groups really outside the capitalist system? Is it possible that we are not dealing with "alterations in the class structure" at all? Newness and progressiveness can be attributed to this consciousness only by ignoring its major *internal* structural feature—its class composition. The social composition of youth rebellion and women's liberation has been predominantly higher status. It is for this reason that many of the items of their consciousness do not have revolutionary potential. (See Marlene Dixon's excellent article on the class basis of the women's liberation movement in *Berkeley Journal of Sociology,* 1971.) Some of them do, but this potential can be discovered only by taking a *consistent class point of view* which Merkx's analysis rules out by *theoretically* writing off the working class. In looking at other groups which he deals with—the racial and nationality groups—significant differences in consciousness can be identified. The major political demands made, for example, by blacks and Chicanos more directly assume revolutionary dimensions because their class origins are actually working class. When not employed as producing workers, they are certainly not expelled from the system but remain a necessary and intrinsic part of it in the form of an industrial reserve army of labor (as do youth and women when seen in proper perspective).

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It has often been said, and it is obvious, that black nationalism too has revolutionary significance because of the possibility of linking it to proletarian class consciousness. The same may be true of some parts of the rebellion of youth and women, but concrete analysis of the consciousness of these groups must separate their progressive (proletarian or potentially proletarian) from their retrogressive (bourgeois) elements. Merkx's mode of analysis cannot do this fundamental exercise because it has rejected the centrality of the capital-labor contradiction. By lumping proletarian demands, actual or potential, with all age and sex rebellion, the problem of class analysis and class politics becomes hopelessly confused. In spite, then, of a seemingly radical posture, the essential features of class analysis have actually been jettisoned altogether.

Finally, with regard to the prospects for the "new consciousness," the argument moves from hope to despair and back again, a fluctuation common to the consciousness itself. Since Merkx does not see that much of it serves a conservative purpose, that is, it contributes to many of the ongoing values of capitalist society, he therefore cannot comprehend what a truly anti-capitalist class consciousness might be like. At one point, he hints, as if by accident, at the revolutionary political significance of the producing class when he remarks that when "those parts of the population who are *not* structurally alienated finally refuse to play their ordinary roles, the old regime falls" (emphasis in the original). But he cannot follow up the implications of this generalization because it would lead him to the class position from which he should have started. Instead he returns, in the end, to bemoaning the fragmentation of the "new consciousness" and can only hope that it will achieve a unity before the onslaught of fascism is upon us. "Those who desire a revolutionary outcome still have time to work toward the unity of alienated groups and to seek allies from those who will yet leave the mainstream." It is dangerous to look outside the mainstream alone for one's true friends (while ignoring or by default even renouncing those millions who by their labor carry this or any other society). It is just such friends who, because of their class position and its attendant consciousness, may do least to save us from fascism.

Herbert Gamberg

February 1972
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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REJOINDER TO HERBERT GAMBERG'S RESPONSE

I regret that Herbert Gamberg's response to my recent article in MR devotes so much energy to attacking me as a supposed "defender" of new forms of consciousness and (by direct implication) as a helper of fascism. In so doing he fails to come to grips with the two critical issues upon which the paper focuses: (1) the nature of productive relations under monopoly capital and their impact upon the superstructure, and (2) the implications of such a theory for revolutionary practice. In part this attack seems to reflect a misunderstanding of my arguments. Nevertheless, Gamberg's criticisms raise the issue of just what constitutes a Marxist analysis, and may help us clarify the question of the social consequences of monopoly capitalism.

First I would like to make a brief point about the importance of the discussion. It is clear that the "unity of theory and practice" conceived by Marx meant the unity of the analysis of concrete history with practice. In other words, revolutionary practice must be informed by the theoretical understanding of the society in which the practice takes place. Such an understanding comes from the application of historical materialism. As Marxists we cannot simply have leftist values. We must also analyze, according to the principles of historical materialism, the system which confronts us, so that we can have some ability to act effectively in the America of the seventies.

Gamberg raises a number of specific objections to my analysis of the relations of production. But the main source of his unhappiness stems from his feeling that I have downgraded the "revolutionary political significance of the producing class" by not paying enough attention to class conflict, internal class analysis of ethnic groups, and "proletarian demands, actual or potential." Gamberg thinks that I have "rejected the centrality of the capital-labor distinction" by not focusing my analysis upon the proletariat. On the other hand, he feels that the racial and nationality groups I mention are largely proletarian because they belong to the "reserve army of labor."

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Gamberg's objections reflect a position that is not uncommon in certain traditionalist variants of Marxism. On the one hand ethnic and nationality issues are reduced to working-class issues, and on the other hand any analysis of the political role of ethnic and nationality groups is criticized for ignoring the working class. Implicit or explicit in this is the argument that analyses not predicated upon the proletariat cannot be Marxist. Marxist analysis is reduced to lauding the revolutionary role of the industrial working class. It may be worth recalling that Mao Tse-tung was censured by the Chinese Communist Party some decades ago with an almost identical logic for stressing the revolutionary role of the peasantry.

Nor is an argument Marxist simply because it does emphasize the revolutionary role of the proletariat. It should be remembered that historical materialism is not only a theory of capitalism: it is a theory of history and of society. To use another terminology, it is a general theory, which also contains within it a specific theory, the theory of *Capital.* In the writing of *Capital,* in his letters and other works, Marx makes it plain that historical materialism is not *just* a theory of the productive relations of classic capitalism, but also can be applied to other historical periods and situations. Marx himself commented on a number of such situations (classical Greece, tribalism, feudalism, mid-nineteenth century Mexico, for example). The conflict between capital and labor, to which Gamberg refers, is indeed central to Marx's specific theory of classic capitalism, but his theory of historical materialism contains a more general conception of conflict: the contradiction between the mode of production and the relations of production. One of the points demonstrated in *Capital* is that classic capitalism is distinguished from other historical societies precisely because the conflict between capital and labor replaces other contradictions between the mode and relations of production to become the central contradiction. Thus Marx's own work shows that this conflict is not central to all historical societies, but is so specifically to classic capitalism.

A Marxist analysis of a concrete historical society therefore should not begin with the assumption that the central contradiction is that between capital and labor. This can be a conclusion, but not an assumption. It must begin, as Marx began his analysis of *Capital,* with an analysis of the mode of production and of the relations of production. If we are to take a clear look at the structure of America in the period of monopoly capital, we cannot rely

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solely upon the analysis and conclusions of Marx's study of a system of production that existed a century ago, but rather we must apply his theory to the present system.

The article which Gamberg is criticizing represents just that: the application of historical materialism to the analysis of late capitalism. In a highly condensed argument, I try to define the key features of the relations of production under monopoly capital, show how these have shifted since the classical period of early capital, and in turn argue that this shift in the base of society has in turn led to a superstructural crisis marked by proliferation of new forms of consciousness. This change is primarily in the upper level of the superstructure, that of ideology and thought, but it is not without consequences for the lower level of the superstructure, that of social institutions such as government, political parties, universities, and so on. The main problems for the lower level of the superstructure stem from the fact that it was established during the period of classic capitalism and is no longer particularly suited to the changed relations of production. The class structure has changed, but the superstructure has not changed in many respects, certainly not with respect to the political system. This is precisely the type of situation which Marx considered to be potentially revolutionary.

The essential question which should be asked of this analysis is not whether it is Marxist, which it clearly is, but whether or not it is *correct*. In my opinion that is less clear, and I hope that future discussion will help us to answer some of the questions about the social relations of late capitalism which I am trying to raise.

My principal conclusion about the social impact of monopoly capital has to do with its consequences for labor and hence for the class system. To quote Mandel:

> The production of an abundance of goods and services is in fact accompanied by the more and more rapid elimination of all living, direct, human labor from the production process, and even from the distribution process. . . . The elimination of living human labor from production means the elimination of wages from the cost of production!*

Monopoly capital is expelling labor from the productive process, and we cannot treat this by talking about the reserve army of

* Ernest Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), vol. 2, p. 666.

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labor. Increasing numbers of people will never be hired again. They are not part of the reserve army of labor. Rather, to use the term I introduced, they are *structurally alienated* from the productive process.

I proceeded to argue that most of the people structurally alienated up to now have been female, young, black, Chicano, Indian, or Puerto Rican. Some of them have articulated their situation through forms of "ethnic" consciousness (I hope someone will suggest a better word than "ethnic"). But they share a common class situation, defined by the relations of production. In no sense am I "defending" ethnic consciousness, Mr. Gamberg. Quite the opposite. I am attempting to show that beneath the various identities of the different ethnic, youth, and women's groups lies a shared, more fundamental class position: structural alienation.

Gamberg mentions "potential proletarian demands." How does one identify "potential" demands? My judgment is that the actual, as opposed to the potential, demands of the working class are not very revolutionary. On the other hand, those who are still in the proletariat *are* essential to the economy in its present form. It is also evident that many proletarians are deeply unhappy and discontented, even if it shows up sometimes in hostility to protesting "ethnic" groups. There is not likely to be a revolution without the working class, and I argue that the allegiance of the working class to the current system (of which the purged and co-opted labor unions are such a conspicuous part) is tenuous. The working class is indeed a key to the outcome of the American crisis. But it cannot be understood in isolation. The state of the working class must be analyzed with respect to the dynamics of the overall system, and most particularly, with respect to the other large exploited class, the structurally alienated.

The working class and the structurally alienated class are exploited in different ways, of course. Not least, they are used against each other as targets for their respective mutual grievances. Nonetheless, even though their class *positions* (in the relations of production) are different, their class *interests* vis-à-vis monopoly capital are the same. One of the critical tasks for the Left, *the* critical task, I argue, in the immediate future, is to provide both the working class and the structurally alienated class with the analyses necessary for them to recognize and become actively conscious of their class positions under monopoly capital and of their common class interests.

One of the reasons for the heretofore successful development

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of American capitalism has been its ability to transform class consciousness into ethnic consciousness, thereby dividing the people. The task we face on the Left is to translate ethnic consciousness back into class consciousness. But class consciousness must be based upon class realities, not upon sentimental attachments to nineteenth-century conditions.

At this point it may be useful to comment briefly upon two other issues raised by Gamberg. First: his attack on my one-paragraph reference to the triumph of capitalism in the nineteenth century. Despite what Gamberg thinks, I am not painting a "rosy picture." I am simply mentioning that early capitalism depended upon and employed large amounts of labor, and that it succeeded in imposing its institutions upon the society and its forms of consciousness upon large sectors of the population. Of course this was fought bitterly by the working class. But in spite of the Molly McGuires, Haymarket Square, Eugene Debs, and so on, capitalism *did* impose its institutions. To talk about the "temporary weakness of the working class," as Gamberg does, does not help matters. Or does Gamberg think that it was the *working* class which imposed its institutions upon America?

Secondly, Gamberg's suggestion that we apply internal class analysis to the internal struggle of age, sex, and race groups would be helpful if we were interested only in understanding the internal dynamics of these groups. This is a valuable undertaking. It will tell us very little about the *overall* structure of the relations of production, and it will be of limited help in understanding the relationship between the base and the superstructure. Since I am dealing with these latter questions, his suggestion is not particularly relevant. However, internal class dimensions do exist and influence the dynamics of such groups, and I hope they will continue to be explored.

In closing, let us return to the other issue with which the article was concerned: revolutionary practice. If the analysis which I present is accurate, and America is indeed coming closer to a superstructural crisis, then the chances for social revolution are very much larger than we might think. At the same time the danger that a fascist regime may replace the present bourgeois democratic system is also larger. The critical task for the Left, then, and it too may be more critical than we think, is to promote the consciousness of a common class situation and interests among structurally alienated groups, and to develop the recognition of

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common interest between these groups and the working class. What is needed is not a popular front, but a populist front.

A vital step in guiding this practice, and in defining and communicating the critical issues, must be the continued development of a Marxist theory of monopoly capital and its social relations. Such a theory should not only face the realities of the American class structure, but be based upon them. If one of the facts of the American class structure is the existence of a very large class of structurally alienated people, then the analysis and exposure of this situation is essential. Just who *is* helping fascism, Mr. Gamberg? Those who attempt to explain the class basis of ethnic identity and spread the consciousness of shared class interests, or those who attack such an effort as pro-fascist?

Gilbert Merkx

May 1972
University of Goteborg
Goteborg, Sweden

These prisons have always borne a certain resemblance to Dachau and Buchenwald, places for the bad niggers, Mexicans, and poor whites. But the last ten years have brought an increase in the percentage of blacks for crimes that can *clearly* be traced to political-economic causes. There are still some blacks here who consider themselves criminals—but not many. Believe me, my friend, with the time and incentive that these brothers have to read, study, and think, you will find no class or category more aware, more embittered, desperate, or dedicated to the ultimate remedy—revolution. . . .

—George Jackson

We were never permitted to talk or remain in the same prisons; yet we were in full accord as to how to act. When men carry the same ideals in their hearts, nothing can keep them isolated, neither the walls of prisons nor the sod of cemeteries, for a single memory, a single spirit, a single idea, a single consciousness, a single dignity, will sustain them all.

—Fidel Castro

The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then, this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out the fact more glaringly.

—Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*

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(*Continued from inside front cover*)
Random House has just published *Les Blancs: The Collected Last Plays of Lorraine Hansberry,* edited by Robert Nemiroff and with an introduction by Julius Lester.

Our correspondence with prisoners, and the distribution of MR and MR books to prisoners, keeps on growing. The response to our request for funds for this activity has been gratifying, but the need for additional contributions continues. A New England reader wrote us last month, "I recently came into some money unexpectedly—what you call, I guess, a windfall. At about the same time I happened to read the letters from prisoners in your May issue. I was quite moved by them, and decided then and there to use a big hunk of the money to help you meet the prisoners' requests. Now the money has come through, so here's my contribution. I hope you're getting others too." Along with the letter came two checks: one for $200 to "MR Prisoners Fund" and another to become an MR Associate. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the anonymous donor who sent $500 to the Prisoners Fund.

Prisoner readers will surely be interested in still another donation. Felix Greene, responding to the moving "Letters from Prison" in the May 1972 MR, has sent us one hundred copies of his book, *The Enemy—What Every American Should Know About Imperialism,* for distribution to interested prisoners. This book, reviewed in the September 1971 MR, is an unusually effective and well-written analysis of the enemy. When we asked Felix Greene for permission to tell our readers about his action, he wrote, "Yes, of course mention it—it might encourage other authors to add to your bookshelf for prisons."

We have been asked to announce the forthcoming Midwest Conference for a Relevant Social Science, to be held in Chicago on February 23-25, 1973. The purpose of the conference is to consider alternate approaches to fundamental social issues. The conference, it is planned, will deal not only with theoretical debate but also with the task of making research and expertise available to activists. Those interested in learning further details can write to William A. Pelz, 1237 W. North Shore Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60626.

Some months ago the National Peace Literature Service of the American Friends Service Committee (160 N. 15 St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102) published a 4-page annotated list of *Good Reading on China.* In it, preference has been given to paperback editions where available, and to inexpensive items. The list includes prices and the addresses of the publishers of these books, pamphlets, magazine articles, and newsletters. A copy can be obtained by sending twenty cents to the AFSC at the above address.

We have received a suggestion that we stimulate additional communication between readers and authors of MR articles: "It would be most informative for readers to, at least, be able to ask questions or make criticisms of articles previously published. The authors of these articles could make the replies. This might spur more communication among the Left and create a spirit of intelligent self-criticism." To a limited extent this has been taking place. We will be glad to assist in expanding reader-author interchange of ideas, and where such correspondence is of more general interest publish them in the "Correspondence" section.

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